

CRIKEY! 9-3—YET NO-ONE WAS REALLY TO BLAME!

By "CHILTERN"

Leytonstone 9, Wycombe Wanderers 3.

WYCOMBE Wanderers surprised Isthmian League leaders Leytonstone twice in the first-half—and twice went into the lead. But in the second-half the leaders went goal mad, and cracked home a further six goals to Wycombe's one.

Yet it is not as bad as the result suggests. Wanderers scored first and were winning 2-1. And they are the only side to put three goals past the solid Leytonstone defence all season.

Then how did Leytonstone net nine? It's hard to explain. It just seemed so easy. About every time the Stones made a serious attack they netted. Whereas Wycombe, who were on top for long periods in both halves, did not use their territorial advantage to full effect.

Before Wycombe's visit, Leytonstone had only conceded 12 goals all season. Yet the Wycombe forwards found little difficulty in slicing open the league's most solid defence.

It was not the defence that presented the problem. It was the fast, direct, intelligent Leytonstone forwards. When they raided they always seemed to have that extra man to shoot after the Wycombe defence had been drawn.

HEAVY MUD

Their forwards were nippier in the heavy mud than the Wycombe defenders. And they were given room to shoot.

Don't blame John Maskell, the Wanderers' keeper. He was at fault with the first—that's all. He was given no chance with the others. Despite picking the ball out of the net nine times he made some brilliant saves, preventing the Stones from going into double figures.

Play began with a sense of urgency. Both sides realised the winner would go to the top of the table. Leytonstone made the early running, but in the 12th minute Worley and Bates combined well on the right before slipping the ball through to Tony Horseman, whose shot struck the left-hand upright and rolled along the goal-line before going in.

It took Leytonstone just three minutes to get over that shock, when Stone was on hand to equalise after Maskell had failed to hold a Wilkinson centre.

A minute later Paul Bates hit his 24th league goal of the season from the edge of the penalty area, to restore the Wanderers' lead.

Maskell saved well from Stone, Harvey and Minall before Gray equalised. Peter Diwell gave Leytonstone a 3-2 interval lead, with the first of his four goals.

Five minutes after the break Gray was allowed room to shoot, and he made it 4-2. Four minutes later Harvey and Minall split the Wycombe defence to put Peter Diwell through to score again. This was goal-getting gone mad.

Yet two minutes later Les Merrick still put Wanderers back in the reckoning with a fine goal from the edge of the box.

In the 65th minute Wycombe should have had a penalty when Charles clearly handled in the area, but the referee waved play on. Diwell made it 6-3 from a goalmouth scramble. After that it seemed that each time Wanderers put on the pressure, Leytonstone broke away and scored. Sounds double Dutch—but it was that sort of a game.

Diwell, challenging for an England place, made it 7-3 in the 71st minute after Peter Royston headed across the goal only to see the ball stick in the mud.

Harvey headed the eighth from a corner and with two minutes to go, Stone scored the ninth. It was fantastic.

So Leytonstone went one over the eight and really celebrated. But Wanderers get the hang-over. Their problem is to find how on earth it really happened—and make sure it never happens again.